

Washington, DC -- The House of Representatives today unanimously passed an amendment offered by Congressman Vern Buchanan to improve patient care for wounded soldiers. The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act (H.R. 1538) includes legislation authored by Buchanan to study the feasibility of a standard Soldier Patient Tracking System to locate any patient in the medical holdover (MHO) process which requires injured soldiers to stay in certain facilities until they are evaluated and treated.

“Members of our armed forces who have volunteered their service and sacrificed their health to help ensure our freedom and security deserve the best possible care,” said the freshman lawmaker. “A patient tracking system would make available important information regarding the status of a patients care and help ensure they get the treatment and assistance they need and have earned in a timely manner.”

On the floor of the House, Buchanan recalled criticism in the aftermath of the Walter Reed scandal about the medical hold and holdover process, including the congressional testimony of Army Staff Sergeant John Daniel Shannon, who sat in his room for weeks awaiting information about his continuing medical care. The Buchanan Amendment would require the Department of Defense to identify and report to Congress ways of making the medical holdover system more responsive and effective for military personnel like Staff Sergeant Shannon.

“I believe every service member should have complete, on-demand information with respect to his or her status as a medical holdover,” said the 13th District Congressman. “No soldier should sit in their room for weeks wondering about their treatment or when their next appointment will be. The Department of Defense must closely examine ways to give service members real-time information regarding key milestones in the physical and medical evaluation processes. By requiring a report to Congress, my amendment will make certain that we are knowledgeable and considering all available options when it comes to improving the medical holdover process for our troops and their families.”

The Wounded Warrior Assistance Act makes several improvements to medical care, quality of life, and the administrative processes associated with American troops wounded or injured in combat and other military medical outpatients including:

- The elimination of the monthly travel deductible and an increase in the mileage reimbursement

for veterans from 11 cents to the federal employees rate of 48.5 cents;

- The creation of a toll-free hotline for military personnel and their families to report deficiencies;
- Caps on the number of cases a physical evaluation board liaison officer may handle at 20
- Limits medical care case managers to 17 cases; and
- Facilitates an easier transition of care from the Department of Defense to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Buchanan supports passage of the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act.